



# GARDNER NEWSLETTER

## AGNES SEARS' 95TH BIRTHDAY

### COUSIN TERESA HONORS A WONDERFUL FRIEND

By: *Teresa Vasko*

**M**ost of you don't know this lady and probably wonder why this is in the *Gardner Newsletter*. It isn't *just* because Paul is always looking for articles to add to the newsletter ... although he is.

If you attended our 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary two years ago, you might remember this lady. She played the organ that day as she did 50 years before at our wedding in the same building ... it was a church then and now a community hall. (*See the Summer 2018 issue of the Gardner Newsletter, No. 83, Vol. 21*).

I love her and would do anything for her. Last summer, I was asked to take her to a doctor's appointment. When we arrived, I was handed a clipboard with several papers that needed to be filled out. No problem. There were only two empty chairs. The waiting room was full. It was hard for her to read.

Agnes is hard of hearing, so I had to read the questions loudly. All was well until the question, "Has this injury affected your sex life?" You could hear a pin drop. Her response was: "Barely." I did not make eye contact with anybody, but I could hear them stifling their laughter.

Rain was in the forecast for the day of her birthday. It was a lovely weather day. The rain held off until the nearly 50 cars went past her house on a drive-by. Her comment was, "It didn't rain on my parade!"

The picture is of the sign I made for the car windows. I did not leave the "H" off of the sign, just cut it off in the picture.



ABOVE: AGNES SEARS WITH WELL-WISHERSS; COUSIN TERESA VASKO; CAR WINDOW SIGN

## Car Parade Honors Agnes Sears on her 95th Birthday

By Stephen Garfield

LYNDONVILLE – The packed parking lot at Lyndon Outing Club didn't say it all for the birthday person they were honoring.

There were still more greetings, well wishes, and waving by-passers driving decorated cars who formed a procession and drove past Agnes Sears' Hill Street home in Lyndonville. At 95 years old, the birthday girl was all smiles and couldn't have been more pleased.

Led by Lyndon Police Chief Jack Harris, the parade started from the Outing Club, and as it crested the hill, a smile decorated Agnes' face when the procession came into view.

A lifelong resident of Lyndonville, Agnes graduated from Lyndon Institute in 1943. She was on the girls' basketball team, was class secretary as an alumna; and, to this day, this young senior citizen walks three laps a day around her alma mater's track. "I'm kind of proud of that," she said with a grin.

She still looks fit enough to ski but doesn't. Her house, however, is within sight of the Outing Club, which is where both she and her kids learned to ski.

"It's one of the best things that happened to us," Agnes said. "We bought a house here, and the kids could walk up there to ski. It was wonderful." Her son, Paul Sears, chimed in with how much he and his family liked the Outing Club. "Every November, during Thanksgiving, it was like a Christmas present," he recalled. "We used it."

The whole idea for the car parade came around when the original plan to use the church for the occasion didn't happen, "so we brought the church to her," her daughter, Marcia Woodall, said. Woodall is a Goshen, NY resident.

The church is a big part of Agnes' life. She was the organist at the Methodist Church for 60 years, "and she still plays hymns and even the 'Beer Barrel Polka' on the piano," Marcia said, adding that she and her mom also play duets both on piano and organ. "She played with many singing groups, and I don't even know how many weddings she's played for," her proud daughter said.

The outpouring of friends and friendship filled Agnes with joy, similar to the outpouring she received as Grand Marshal of the annual Stars and Stripes parade in 2019."

"I'm a lucky lady," she said. "I can't believe all these people came. It's amazing, and I've enjoyed it more than any other birthday I've ever had. It makes life worthwhile."

## ENOUGH ALREADY, WITH THE FISHER CATS!

The Spring 2020 issue of the newsletter published an article about how Grandpa Gardner used to hunt fisher cats in Vermont and collect the bounty from them offered by the state. That particular article piqued the interest of Mike Ludgate (Cousin Raylene's husband) who belongs to The Canaan Institute, an organization outside as well as that address and sustain-



He posted about handles population in

that promotes musical activities hiking adventures other venues environmental ability issues.

several links how New York the fisher cat that state.

The following blurb he sent illustrates the great work performed by New York's DEC in connection with the fisher cat population.

### What Drives Changes in the Fisher Populations in the Northern Zone?

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) staff, in partnership with researchers from SUNY ESF, are conducting a study to better understand what drives changes in fisher populations in the Central Adirondacks specifically, and more widely across the Northern Zone. With the help of a number of trappers, fishers are live-captured during the winter and adult females fitted with GPS collars to locate and monitor dens and kit production. The combination of real-time GPS location data, as well as trail cameras deployed at maternal den sites, help estimate kit production and survival. Ultimately, DEC will use data on the reproductive potential of Northern Zone fisher populations and gain a better understanding of population dynamics to inform season setting and ensure sustainable harvest opportunities for this important furbearer resource.

For more information on fisher and their management in New York, visit [DEC's website](#).

## MORE ABOUT MIKE LUDGATE . . . .

### MIKE LUDGATE CONTRIBUTES TO AND COMES FROM A RICH MUSICAL HERITAGE

**The Band – The O’Shanigans** perform Celtic, American and world fiddle tunes suitable for contra dancing, general entertainment, private parties and weddings. Members of The O’Shanigans are Jon Avery Fuller (fiddle, percussion), Philip Robinson (Guitar), Michael Ludgate (mandolin, feet) and Katrina Mackey (flute, fiddle). We perform as a trio often, and also as a quartet or duo. We also work with guest musicians and dance callers.

**Michael Ludgate –** Mike plays mandolin, fiddle and Irish tenor banjo for O’Shanigans, Metku, Notes Inégales and The Canaan Jazz Trio. He also occasionally plays mandolin and fills in for Six Mile Creek Boys, Brookton Bridge, Zingology and others. Michael comes from a long local line of Ithaca musicians. His grandfather, Morris “Moe” Harper, was a local jazz clarinet and tenor saxophone player in the Ithaca area. During the 1940’s through the 1960’s, Moe’s wife, Ina, played violin in a more classical style.

Mike’s mother, Roberta, played flute and piano and was popular around town as a piano accompanist for a variety of musical tasks. Mike remembers vividly the multiple barbershop quartets training in the living room as a child with coaching from his mom. This was the beginning of Michael’s musical education. He always tinkers with the keys of any keyboard he walks by, but never took a lesson – he says he wishes he did. He started on trombone in 4th grade at the public schools in Dryden NY, taking some private lessons

from some of his grandfather’s jazz friends, Woody Peters and Ned Dunham, along the way. When his sister took up flute, he just couldn’t resist noodling with woodwinds and started playing scales and simple tunes on flute and saxophone and clarinet.



This instrumental distraction continues today; Michael picked up his grandmother’s violin as an adult in his mid-forties and taught himself to read treble clef with help from a Suzuki book. Then his spouse (Raylene) took pity on him (or the rest of the family?) and offered to pay for lessons. He took lessons on violin from IC Masters violinist Rebecca Anne Geiger Hamlin for three years and at that same time started hosting the weekly Wednesday fiddle and contra tune jam session from his home.

He also plays rudimentary guitar; thanks to Phil Shapiro’s guitar class! Mike has studied Irish tenor banjo, influenced by Harry Lawless of Traonach. He learned the basics of playing fiddle tunes for contra dancers from Ted Crane and Pamela Goddard’s many open band opportunities.

He has also been influenced greatly by David Kaynor. Michael started the Upstate NY area’s only waltz band a few years ago. This is an open band that plays once per month at the Bethel Grove Contra dances. Most recently, Michael has developed a passion for mandolin which he plays mostly melodically in a Celtic style, with some New England, bluegrass, and old-time influence with thanks to Wayne Fugate, David Surette, Phil Banaszak, Tod Sukontarak and Tom Quigley, to name a few.

Michael loves and supports the open bands and open acoustic jams around the Ithaca area and attends many of them when time permits. Michael continues to host a weekly contra tune jam (open jam) at his home in Brooktondale NY. Recently Michael performed with the Cornell Middle Eastern Music Ensemble (CMEMME) where he studied Armenian, Turkish and other Middle Eastern fiddle styles under Harold Hagopian and Atakan Sari.



*Michael Ludgate*

## WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT OUR SPECIAL SUMMER 2020 ISSUE

*We hope everyone read the Summer 2020 issue about racial injustice/police brutality and the pandemic. Your opinions matter. Send in your comments for discussion so we can publish them.*

*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all our subscribers and readers!*

***(Tyler Seeholzer is Cousin Lorraine Shelton's son. He is in the Air Force.***

Thank you for taking the time to put such effort into your dissection of a tough issue for this quarter's newsletter! It's nice to hear a hometown perspective that is in touch with current events and well-aware of its connection with our past!

***(Lisa DiPasquale Cove is married to Cousin Dr. Chris Cove and is a former Mrs. New York State)***

Great work, Paul!!

***(Carol Turner is a long-time friend of your editor and is an honorary subscriber to the newsletter. She lives in Melrose, MA)***

I read most of your newsletter and it was wonderful. I scanned through the several dates, but I have to say it was very interesting.

***(Merv Avants is Paul and Jean Gardner's cousin on their mother's side. He is a retired Air Force colonel and lives in San Diego with his wife, Gail, and family)***

Paul

I just read your heartfelt Gardner Newsletter. Good job, great summary.

Below is an email you may find useful. It explains how to register for an upcoming

panel with Ibram Kendi and Robin DiAngelo. (I am registered.) The email forwarded to me that says "It's your guy!" is in response to an email I sent recommending Ibram Kendi's book, "How to be an Antiracist." His concepts are too radical for me but, when I look at what is going on in California, and recognizing that things start here and

mer Moon" by S.C. Gwynne, about Native Americans. Many, many awards. I lived on the Great Plains for 7 years in Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Texas so, naturally, was exposed to Native Americans on many levels. "Empire..." is a great book.

***(Kathleen Aragon is a high school classmate of your editor. We have kept in contact with each other through the years. She is an honorary subscriber to the newsletter)***

What an excellent edition of the Gardner Newsletter!

In all the reading I've done, the main thing the authors say is "Don't ask a Black person what you can do". Look around and figure out what to do on your own.

Paul, you did it! You reached a huge audience and did it in a gentle, historical and logical way. I'm betting most will agree with you, but if even a few don't, the fact that they let

you know means they read what you published!

I am so proud of you! I told Barbetta and she is proud of you, too.

Yes, we are all going from one meal to another. What else is there to do? (Except publish an exceptional newsletter).

***(Paulette Heguilustoy is a good friend)***



move east, I think Kendi may be the future.

You should read "American Prison" by Shane Bauer. I just finished it and it is excellent. I would not normally read a book about prisons, but this won so many awards it attracted me. It is as much a "history" book as it is a "prison" book.

Another "history" book that is so much more than that is "Empire of the Sum-

## WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT OUR SPECIAL SUMMER 2020 ISSUE (CONTINUED)

***of Cousin Jean Gonzalo, and her husband, Miguel. She lives in Bakersfield, CA and is an honorary Gardner Newsletter subscriber)***

Hi Paul, hoping you're doing well and staying free of the corona virus! We are all doing well and staying healthy! Hopefully we all stay that way! Talked to Jean and Miguel last week and they are all doing well too!

I want to thank you for the Gardner Newsletter! I love the Zoom In - Zoom Out Theme! So appropriate with the times! Things are awful scary and completely out of hand! Hopefully, things will get better soon! I love your newsletter and you do an amazing job with it! You should be a journalist! Thanks again for always including me! I love it!

How are Rod and Irene doing? I think of them sooooo often! Whenever you talk to Rod please give him my best! They are always in my prayers! Can't believe it is almost a year since we were there! What a great time we all had together! We are sure lucky we were fortunate enough to come last year, as we wouldn't have been able to do it this year!!!!!!

Thanks again for the lovely newsletter, Paul! I really appreciate it! Stay well and healthy! Paulette

***(Gloria Parsons is Uncle Raymond's eldest daughter. She lives in North Reading, MA)***

Wow!

That was a brilliant piece and lots of work and research

I'm afraid I'm guilty in not speaking out enough too. I feel I can get along with all races but I'm not involved or in their shoes.

I don't think we should defund the police, but they do need a watch dog. Maybe more funding to that end.

***(Katrina Jenkins is Gloria Parsons daughter. She and her husband, Kyle, have two beautiful children, Eva and Owen. Uncle Raymond is her grandfather)***

Hello Paul,

I hope this note finds you happy and healthy. I just couldn't put down this issue of the *Gardner Newsletter*. Thank you for your in-depth look at the issues of race, politics, and policing in this country. I am heartened that during these tumultuous times many Americans, especially white Americans like us who have the privilege of being able to look the other way on these issues, seem to be taking them head-on.

I marched in a Black Lives Matter rally here in the white suburban town of Reading, Massachusetts. As I passed Grandpa's house, I blew him a kiss from the sidewalk as we socially distanced, wore masks, and chanted "Black Lives Matter." He was watching the goings-on from his living room window and he blew a kiss back to me.

Sadly, the pandemic makes discussion with Grandpa difficult. He can't hear well enough for a good phone conversation. Meeting in person as the pandemic rages is risky for a 94-year-old man who uses facial expression and lip-reading to understand you well (rendering a masked outdoor conversation almost as difficult as a phone one). Letter writing is good for sending love, but he doesn't always respond so it's not great for a discussion.

I hope that someday soon I can ask him in person what he thought of the rally and our shared reading of your *Gardner Newsletter*.

Be Well,

-Katrina

**A**s a postscript to Cousin Teresa Vasko's article about Agnes Sears, here is a classic example of how a good teacher sows the seeds of learning and reaps the harvest of love and appreciation.

According to Teresa:

"During one school term a long time ago, Agnes Sears' granddaughter was

in my 8th grade Math class, but she wanted to be in my Algebra class instead. It was a couple of months after the start of the school year. She said her Dad would help her, which he did, and it worked out fine.

Fast forward many years later. I received a phone call from this young lady in Texas. I did not recog-

nize the name until she said she was Agnes Sears' granddaughter. She told me that she learned a lot in my class and went on to take all the top math classes in high school.

She wanted me to know that she now has a position teaching high school algebra and wanted to thank me for making a difference in her life!"



Derby Vt.  
March, 26, 1938

Dear Elizabeth,

I haven't written to you for a long time have I? Well I seem to have some spare time now so I guess I'll pound off a few words.

Raymond seemed awful pleased with his birthday card you sent him. There just came a call tom dinner so I guess I'll go.

Boy, we had a good dinner. Maple syrup and twisters. The sap is running awful good so far this spring. Don't think all we had was syrup and twisters but I enjoyed that most. You see that is the first new syrup I've had this year.

The snow is all gone up here but I guess I won't boast because it is snowing and blowing just at present.

The boys and Elinor have

gone to gather thee sap. Beulah is sick in bed. Her stomach is bad.

I went out and milked the cow this morning and my shoulders are so lame now I can hardly punch the board.

Lois is wondering what has happened to you because you haven't written to her for so long.

I went to Prayer meeting last night and Harry May brought me up as far as the turn and left me because the roads are so bad he didn't come up.

A week ago Tuesday night Rev. Gifford, from Newport Center, spoke to our Young Peoples group. She has been a missionary to Hungaria. She told us about her trips through Germany and Austria. When she was in Austria she went to Vienna, and while she was there Dolphus was assinated. She told us all about that. She was very interesting.

Homer was up here yesterday on the truck, I didn't see him but Mama did.

Thanks a lot for the p'j's it makes me just two pair now.

Address - the letter great to Derby Vt

Pharville to me

lots of love

Nita

How would you feel if you opened up an envelope and inside there was a letter to you typed on, of all things, toilet paper – mortified!? – insulted!? – vengeful!? – crappy!? (Pardon the pun.) Funny thing about that. If you received it during the Great Depression, you would be excited and grateful. And I'm sure Aunt Elizabeth was just that.

Cousin Rod Ames sent the *Gardner Newsletter* this letter dated March 26, 1938 written by his mother, Aunt Nita, to her sister, Aunt Elizabeth. Stationery in 1938 must have been very hard to come by during the Depression; but what is amazing to me is how she managed to get the typewriter to work on actual toilet paper.

I was going to print out the entire text for you to read here, but I think the picture is good enough to where you can figure out the body of the letter yourself. In 1938, Aunt Nita was boarding with a family in Derby where she was attending Derby Academy.

Aunt Elizabeth was married to Uncle Homer and living in Lyndonville where he was busy with his food truck business. Aunt Ruth and Aunt Lois had moved away. Uncle Clayton was in and out of the old homestead before it was remodeled. (See the *Winter 2019 issue of the newsletter.*)

The youngest Gardner children, Raymond, Elinor and Beulah, were still living at home with Grandma and Grandpa Gardner.

Maple syrup and "twisters" sure sound good to me! I'll wager if you ask Aunt Beulah what "twisters" are, she would be able to tell you. Perhaps after this pandemic is over, all the Gardners can get together and have a maple syrup and twisters reunion.